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WESTERN AUSTRALIAN STATE SCHOOLS : WOMEN IN PROMOTIONAL POSITIONS IN THE PRIMARY DIVISION

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This paper examines past trends and prevailing statistics and social attitudes regarding promotional opportunities for males and females in the Primary Division of the Education Department of Western Australia. The purpose was to explore why, in this branch of the Department, males occupy most executive positions despite the fact that they constitute a minority in the total workforce.

Changing Societal Attitudes Towards Women in Education

In early colonial days, the assumption still existed in Australia that the epitome of a woman's career was marriage. The historical development of an Australian character was predominantly a male conception incorporating cultural stereotypes of 'mateship', aggression and assertiveness. Early society and schooling were often geared to the specific societal expectations that boys assume positions of leadership and job-related responsibilities, while girls assumed traditional domestic roles. Now, as then, it seems that, because of societal demands, schools continue to produce dependent, self-denigrating females (Mercer, 1975), despite the tendency for girls to achieve better academically at school than boys.

The basic assumption that the male is dominant, lack of role models of women in authority, lack of exposure to achievement-oriented activities for females, sex-role stereotyped literature and the male subculture have all been advanced as reasons why, despite the superior academic performance of girls at high school level, they constantly fail to achieve positions of authority in society as adults.

Women develop a different life pattern to men because of their role as child bearer. However, this life pattern has changed dramatically in this technological age. Contraception, labour saving devices and changing family patterns have shortened the length of time that a woman spends in child rearing but they have not eliminated that time. Despite the fact that 25 per cent of women in our society have always worked outside the home, the recruitment of women to the workforce during war-time established new horizons for women in terms of their role in the job market. Now 43 per cent of all women between the ages of 15 and 65 are in the workforce. The social pressures of the past, such as differentiated role training, unequal pay for equal work, and male domination are now viewed as discriminatory as many women seek self-actualisation outside the home.

Many women, however, cannot pursue their career with the single-minded dedication that a male can exercise in his career largely because of the maternal role they are required to fulfil. In Western Australia today, many women have been socialised into a domestically oriented role but are spending the greater portion of their adult lives in the workforce. Society, as yet, does not seem to provide the necessary support for a woman to pursue her career. Despite the fact that currently 56 per cent of the women in the 35-44 year age group (women whose children are in school all day) are employed, flexible timetables, job sharing, after-school child care and adequate parental leave are rarely available to them to facilitate this participation in the workforce. Part-time work is the solution for some, but this does not enable them to become part of the promotional structure in most instances.

Skertchely (1975) points to a future where knowledge of the social sciences and the provision of community and personal services will need to balance our knowledge of the physical sciences and the pressures created by technological development. It is in the former area that employment of females is high. The expectation then is that, in future, schools must provide training which will allow girls to operate freely in the workforce and, ultimately, to assume leadership roles.

The teaching service is seen by many as an indication of the way that society accepts women in employment. Studies (Walker, 1971) have shown that women are more committed to classroom teaching than men but less interested in advancement to administrative positions. Women administrators are more competent than men in many areas, but less accepted as leaders by both men and women. A further change in attitude within society is needed before women's potential in the workforce can be realised. This involves a more accepting attitude toward women as leaders, a sharing of domestic tasks in the family situation, equal status credited to male and female career appointments, promotion systems based on female (as well as male) lifestyle patterns, and changed responsiveness by women to the opportunities that exist for promotion.

The societal attitudes of female dependence and passivity has seemed to produce female teachers who have largely been happy to accept the nurturing role that society has accorded to them and the relatively low status they occupy in the primary division of the teaching workforce.

As Rossi (1967, p. 104) states:

There are many areas in which discrimination against women operates as though by divine mandate. The mandate, which turns out not to have been divine anyway, is being strenuously challenged and the system is slowly relenting. But the conviction of male authority is so deeply embedded in the present collective consciousness and integrated so cunningly with social norms that it operates almost by blind axiom, even to be sure with the consent of the dominated.

The principles of equal pay and equal employment opportunities have been accepted by the Australian Government. All State Governments supported the Federal Government when it ratified the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 111—Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) 1958. Yet even that declaration of "equality of employment opportunities" has not led to equal numbers of males and females being employed in positions of authority in State Departments.

Many academically competent girls are attracted to the teaching profession. In 1979, the Australian Information Service published figures stating that there were approximately 141,300 women teachers in Australia, comprising 60 per cent of all teachers. In 1979, 57.7 per cent of Western Australian teachers were female, the largest group of well educated, professional women in the state. Their work, particularly in the primary area, is acknowledged to be the backbone of the profession (Bradley, 1979); yet they play little part in the decision-making and policy-making areas of the Education Department.

It is important to contemplate the reasons for this anomalous situation. It seems that the possible contribution of women has been overlooked by neglect, and has constantly been hindered by structural barriers which were based on a traditional assumption. The assumption was that women would only teach until they married and would then have no further commitment to education and, instead, would devote their lives to rearing their own children. Although these structural barriers have, in the main, been removed by a change in the regulations, there seems to have been little adjustment to the numbers of women in positions of authority within the department. This seems to be a legacy of traditional attitudes and policies.

The Historical Position of Women in Education in Western Australia

During the early years of the colony's foundation, schooling itself was not considered important during a period in which economic survival assumed paramount importance. Apart from a few small private ventures, the first major attempts at education were by female missionaries and this may have been part of the reason for the tendency for female teachers to remain subordinate to a male authority (the Bishop) in the educational sphere. Then segregated boys' and girls' state schools were opened, each emphasizing role differentiated objectives and governed predominantly by male boards.

After 1850, the first major population growth occurred, resulting in a dramatic increase in the number of schools. During this time the Principals of girls' schools received approximately 50 per cent of the salary of the male Principals of boys' schools. With continual growth, coeducation

became the pattern, with the majority of classroom teachers being female but with promotional positions subsumed as a male responsibility except for a few isolated cases. Perhaps this was due to the current male attitude as described in 1853 at a debate on "Women's Intellectuality" which was held at the Swan River Mechanics Institute at which it was claimed that "women are not equal to men in intellect or sound sense. . . . They are incapable of equalling the man and taking the reins of Government into their own hands, and of ruling over men—domestically or otherwise" (Aveling, 1979, p. 286).

In the 1880's, female salaries became 80 per cent of male rates and remained this way until the 1950's, but the promotional possibilities did not change; the ratio of males to females in promotional positions being 4 to 1. In 1893 the Education Department of Western Australia was formed. Under the guidance and direction of Cyril Jackson, the Inspector-General of Schools, came teacher training, the Teachers' Union, a widening of the curriculum and the recruiting of energetic young male teachers who were to become the future educational administrators (Mossenson, 1972). However, female teachers were still in the majority and many had to endure the isolation of one teacher schools in remote areas until they married and were asked to resign. At this stage, of those occupying the positions of Headmaster, 73 per cent were male and 27 per cent female. The female Principals were mainly in provisional (small bush) schools.

During the depression, the ideology of the "scapegoat" (unemployment is caused by women taking men's jobs) became a reality for the 58.9 per cent of teachers who were female. Reliance on this body of teachers to fill vacancies during World War II brought them back into the workforce and brought benefits for them in other states, but not in Western Australia.

The 1950's produced rapid population expansion and an accelerated demand for teachers but created few new opportunities for female teachers other than the recognition of the equal pay for equal work theory. Married women teachers were still regarded as a pool of trained unemployed to be used in times of crisis.

With the prosperity and growth of the late sixties and early seventies came an expanded need for teachers, and the following changes occurred:

- (i) Accouchement leave was granted in 1968.
- (ii) Equal pay for women was granted in 1971.
- (iii) It was officially gazetted in 1972 that married women could gain permanent status; however, it was not until 1976 that the clause which stated that married women had to sign a guarantee to say that they would teach anywhere in the state was revoked.
- (iv) The first woman Principal of a coeducational Senior High School was appointed in 1972.

- There are now no direct structural barriers to women gaining promotion in the Education Department of W.A., yet the numbers of women in promotional positions in Western Australian State schools has not increased overall. An explanation for this anomaly is offered at a later point in this essay.

Figure 1 shows promotional figures over the growth period from 1969-1979 within the department. Figure 2 contrasts the proportion of males and females in staffing positions and Principals' positions in the primary division during the years 1959, 1964, 1969, 1974 and 1979. The figures show that the proportion of female staff has been rising but the proportion of women in promotional positions has been falling. Numerically, females are in the majority in the classroom but in the minority in promotional positions. Figure 2 was derived from the following tables and statistics.

	Male	Female	Total
Headmasters	427	31	458
Deputy Headmasters Masters/Mistresses	907	1,325	2,232

In 1959, women made up 50.6 per cent of the total teaching staff and yet only 2.1 per cent of them held promotional positions. In the primary service, women made up 59.4 per cent of the total teaching staff. Only 2.5 per cent of females were in promotional positions (Headmaster), whereas 37.5 per cent of the 40.6 per cent who were male teachers were in promotional positions (Headmaster).

POSITION	1969				1974				1979			
	Female	M	Total	%	Female	M	Total	%	Female	M	Total	%
Director General		1	100	1			100	1			100	1
Assistant Director General		2	100	2			100	3			100	3
Director		5	100	5			100	5			100	5
Assistant Director		4	100	4			100	6			100	6
Regional Directors		-	-	-			-	-			-	-
Superintendent	5	10.6	42	89.4	47	4	7	53	93	57	10	13.7
Principal: Senior High School	5	8.5	54	91.5	59	4	5.6	68	94.4	72	11	11.5
High School			33	100	33	-		51	100	51	1	1.6
District High School 1			16	100	16			13	100	13		
District High School 2			25	100	25			23	100	23		
Primary School 1A			15	100	15			26	100	26		
Primary School 1			39	100	39			40	100	40		
Primary School 2	12	10.7	100	89.3	112	11	6.7	151	93.3	162	8	5
Primary School 3	7	9.5	67	90.5	74	8	10.7	67	89.3	75	11	13.1
	2	2.1	137	97.9	140	2	1.5	130	98.5	132	1	0.8
Deputy Principal: Senior High	22	4.8	432	95.2	454	21	4.2	501	95.8	522	22	3.8
High			32	49.2	33	52	50	52	50	104	64	50.8
District High 1	15	51.7	14	48.3	29	13	50	13	50	26	11	57.9
District High 2	16	41	23	59	39	23	50	23	50	46	24	34.8
Primary 1A			-	-	-			-	-	-		
Primary 1	39	50	39	50	78	40	50	45	50	80	75	50.7
	98	49.7	99	50.3	197	161	51.6	151	48.4	312	164	51.9
Senior Master/Mistress:	200	49	208	51	408	289	50.9	279	49.1	568	338	47.8
Senior High School	28	10.5	238	89.5	266	64	13.8	401	86.2	465	76	13.3
High School	3	7.9	35	92.1	38	-		30	100	30	4	11.4
Overall Totals	31	10.2	273	89.8	304	64	12.9	431	87.1	495	80	13.2
Departmental Staff	258	21.1	967	78.9	1225	378	22.8	1279	77.2	1657	453	22.7
% of Staff in Prom. posns overall	3419	52.4	3111	47.6	6530	4854	54.6	4041	45.4	8895	7303	57.7
% of Staff in Prom. posn. by sex	3.95		14.81	18.76		4.25		14.38	18.63		3.56	
Ratio of Staff in Prom. posn. by sex	19.43		80.57			19.95		80.05			17.82	
			1:4.147					1:4.013			1:4.613	

FIGURE 1: Staffing structure of promotional positions within the W.A. Education Department.

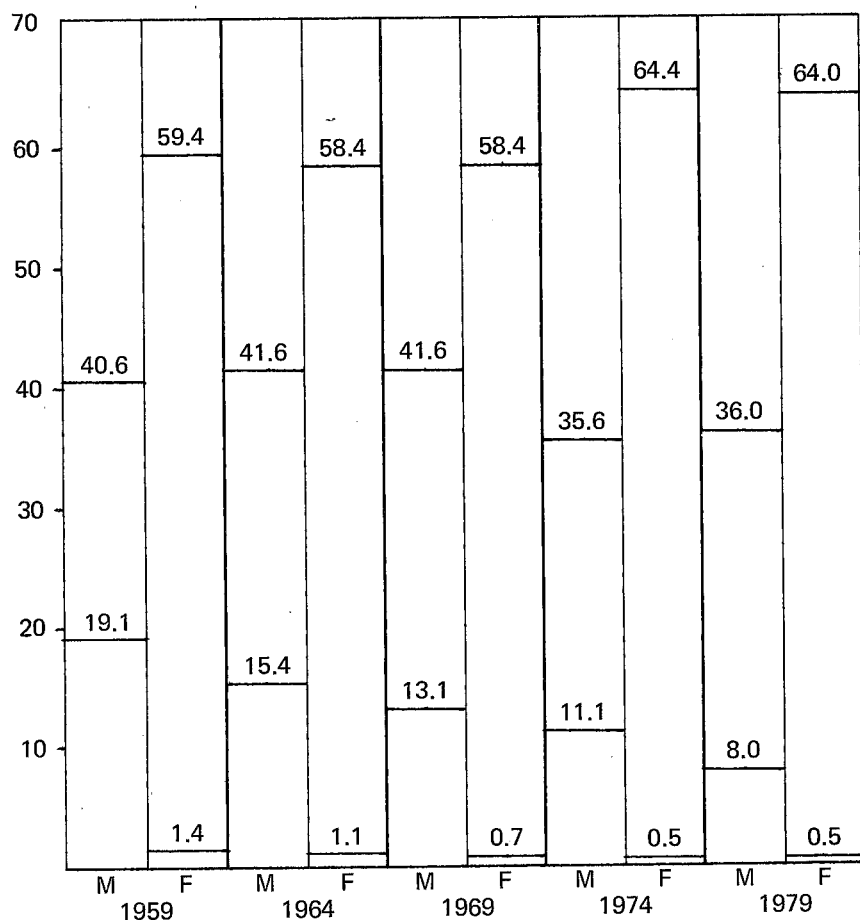


FIGURE 2: Percentages of Primary staff and promotional positions held by sex at five periods of time (1959-64-69-74-79) in the Education Department of Western Australia.

Comments :

Total primary staff percentages are those which are the greater in each case. Members holding promotional positions (Headmasters) are smaller. For example, in 1979, males held 36 per cent of the positions. They also held 8.0 per cent of the 8.5 per cent that are promotional positions (Principals). Women held the rest, only 0.5 per cent of those promotional positions, whereas they were 64 per cent of the total primary staff.

TABLE 2
Number of Personnel Engaged in Teaching Duties - Primary - 1964

	Full-time			Part-time			Grand Total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Headmasters	448	33	481				481
Deputy Headmasters	131	133	264				264
Masters/Mistresses	877	1,279	2,156	1	5	6	2,162
Total :	1,456	1,445	2,901	1	5	6	2,907

Source : Education Department of Western Australia, Annual Report, 1964.

In 1964, women made up 46.9 per cent of the total teaching staff and yet only 2.1 per cent of them held promotional positions. In the primary service, women made up 58.4 per cent of the total teaching staff. Only 2.3 per cent of females were in promotional positions (Headmaster), whereas 30.7 per cent of the 41.6 per cent who were male teachers were in promotional positions (Headmaster).

TABLE 3
Number of Personnel Engaged in Teaching Duties - Primary - 1969

	Full-time			Part-time			Grand Total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Headmasters	478	35	503				503
Deputy Headmasters	164	177	341				341
Masters/Mistresses	880	1,917	2,797		10	10	2,807
Total :	1,522	2,119	3,641		10	10	3,651

Source : Education Department of Western Australia, Annual Report, 1969.

In 1969, women made up 52.4 per cent of the total teaching staff and yet only 3.95 per cent of them held promotional positions. In the primary service, women made up 58.4 per cent of the total teaching staff. Only 1.8 per cent of females were in promotional positions (Headmaster), whereas 31.4 per cent of the 41.6 per cent who were male teachers were in promotional positions (Headmaster).

TABLE 4
Number of Personnel Engaged in Teaching
Duties — Primary — 1974

	Full-time			Part-time			Grand Total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Headmasters	510	23	533				533
Deputy Headmasters	215	226	441				441
Masters/ Mistresses	906	2,639	3,545	1	63	64	3,609
Total :	1,631	2,888	4,519	1	63	64	4,583

Source : Education Department of Western Australia, Annual Report, 1974.

In 1974, women were 54.6 per cent of the total teaching profession and 4.25 per cent of them were in promotional positions. In the primary service, women made up 64.4 per cent of the total teaching staff. Only 0.8 per cent of females were in promotional positions (Headmaster), whereas 31.25 per cent of the 35.6 per cent who were male teachers were in promotional positions (Headmaster).

TABLE 5
Number of Personnel Engaged in Teaching
Duties — Primary — 1979

	Full-time			Part-time			Grand Total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Principals and Teachers in Charge	488	30	518				518
Deputy Principals	285	245	530				530
Masters/ Mistresses	1,407	3,402	4,809	6	186	192	5,001
Total :	2,180	3,677	5,857	6	186	192	6,049

Source : Education Department of Western Australia, Annual Report, 1979.

By 1979, 57.7 per cent of the total teaching staff were women and 3.56 per cent of these were in promotional positions. In the primary service, 64 per cent of the teaching staff were women and 0.8 per cent were in promotional positions (Principals and Teachers in Charge), whilst 36 per cent were men and 22.8 per cent of these held promotional positions (Principals and Teachers in Charge).

Deputy Headmasters/Headmistresses or Deputy Principals have not been included in the percentages of those in promotional positions because these are sex-linked positions and are always in an approximate 50:50 ratio.

The percentages of men and women holding promotional positions have declined overall due to the influx of teachers to create smaller class numbers, to allow for specialisation and the opening of Pre-Primary Centres. None of these moves have created promotional positions.

Excluding Deputies' positions, women held 6.8 per cent of Headmasters' positions in 1959. This included Headmistresses of Junior Primary Schools, a sex-linked position.

In 1964, again 6.8 per cent of Head positions were held by females. In 1969, 5.9 per cent of Head positions were held by females. By 1974, only 5.1 per cent of Head positions were held by females. By 1979, this figure had dropped to 4.6 per cent of Principals' positions being held by females. This figure still includes Principals of Junior Primary Schools.

So, in the Primary and Junior Primary areas, the numbers of women in the department have risen from 59.4 per cent of the teaching staff in 1959 to 64 per cent of the teaching staff in 1979. In numbers, women dominate this area of teaching. However, the proportion of women in Head positions has fallen from 2.5 per cent of females holding 6.8 per cent of Head positions in 1959 to 0.8 per cent of females holding 4.6 per cent of Principals' positions in 1979.

Points to be discerned from the foregoing statistical information are that :

- (i) a decreasing percentage of total staff is being promoted;
- (ii) the relationship of females to males in promotional positions has steadily declined and has also decreased as a ratio of staff employed;
- (iii) females are an increasing proportion of the total staff but are holding a decreasing proportion of promotional positions.

Paths of Promotion

In the primary area, the key promotional position is that of Principal of a Class III school and obtaining qualifications and experience to get onto this promotional list is the first step towards higher promotion. In 1969, only 2.1 per cent of these positions were held by women. By 1979, only 0.8 per cent of these positions were held by women. One more female was promoted in this area in 1980. (See Figure 3)

The manner by which promotion lists are compiled and the eligibility for inclusion on these lists are covered in the Education Department of Western Australia Regulations No. 94-100.

In the primary service, the steps to promotion have included the following barriers for women.

1. An inability to obtain permanent status. Some married women are still waiting for permanency.
2. Failure to obtain an academic qualification in the form of a Teachers' Higher Certificate or other appropriate qualification. It is less than 10 years since the majority of married women have been allowed on to the permanent staff and very few would have felt constrained to improve their qualifications owing to the disincentives for promotion that existed prior to the change in regulations. Therefore, women on the permanent staff who notified the department of marriage prior to 1973 would now have, at the most, 8 years seniority. For most married women, that is when they may have started upgrading their qualifications and giving consideration to career expectations involving promotional positions. It is probable that these same women have been on a promotion list for the past 4 or 5 years. Males initially

Promotion List	Class IA Prim.	Class I Prim.	Class II Prim.	Class III Prim.	Class I Jun. Prim.	Class II Jun. Prim.	Class III Jun. Prim.
No. on List	120	56	129	688	4	1	124
Male	120	56	129	549			
%	100	100	100	79.8			
Female				139	4	1	124
%				20.2	100	100	100

Promotion 1980							
	7	9	18	23			
Male	7	9	18	22			
%	100	100	100	95.7			
Female				1	1	3	1
%				4.3	100	100	100
					*	**	

FIGURE 3: 1980 Promotions

* One ECE Pilot Centre was created at this level with one Acting Principal.

** Five ECE Pilot Centres were created at this level with five of them having Acting Principals.

Note : The position of Acting Principal is not a promotional position.

appointed at the same time as these women would possibly have accrued as much as 25 years seniority in the identical period.

3. Delayed progression towards the top positions on the promotional list as the result of the two previously mentioned disadvantages.
4. The need to lodge restricted applications for promotional positions because of family commitments — as a result of the requirement that special promotion could only be granted to applicants willing to go anywhere in the state, women were necessarily disadvantaged.
5. Restricted mobility through the need to defer to the husband's employment obligations. Since the path to promotion lies mainly through a series of country promotional positions, women have found their promotional opportunities decreased.

These last two requirements mitigate against female promotion since couples need to agree that the woman's career is to take precedence over that of her husband's. This is usually, but not always, an economic decision.

As part of this study, a survey was carried out among teachers in the South East Metropolitan Region to gauge their opinions about the promotion system and, in particular, about women's prospects in that system. Two surveys were carried out — the first at the end of 1979. The survey forms were distributed by colleagues of the author to schools in this area. A second set of questionnaires was sent to Principals of other schools in the region in early 1980. The Principals were asked to distribute, collect and return the questionnaires.

Replies were received from 12 per cent of all primary teachers in this region. It was intended to compare the responses of male and female, married and single teachers, and appropriate items were included to ascertain this information. The questionnaire also explored the degree to which the respondents had accumulated appropriate promotional criteria, including status, academic qualifications, currently held position in the Department, the number of years teaching experience, and the number of years on the permanent staff. Questions were also asked regarding the respondents' past, present and future promotional plans and their reasons for or against pursuing promotional positions. Finally, respondents were asked if they felt that women were disadvantaged in the teaching service.

From the survey, the following conclusions could be drawn :

1. Female teachers in state primary schools now show only slightly less interest in promotion than males.
2. Lack of experience/continuity of service was the main reason given for not applying for promotion.
3. Females have less average number of years teaching experience (7.8 years compared to males 13.3 years), less average number of years

on the permanent staff (4.7 years compared to males 10.9 years) and less qualifications than males. Compared to 43 per cent of males, 85 per cent of females still had only their initial teaching qualification.

4. In the future, 36 per cent of females and 70 per cent of males intend to apply for promotion.
5. Women who had taught for more than 7 years, and who had applied for promotion, perceived themselves as more disadvantaged within the system than others. Those who did perceive a female disadvantage listed lack of seniority due to breaks in service, the general attitude of society towards women's careers, lack of adequate accouchement leave and/or child care facilities, lack of encouragement within the school to assume administrative responsibilities, and the inflexibility of tertiary institutions in meeting the specific need of part-time students with family commitments as major limitations in seeking promotion.

There are several reasons why women should be seen as educational administrators in schools.

1. The need for women to make more sympathetic decisions about women and girls within the Education Department.
2. So that girls are provided with leadership role models for their future workforce experience.
3. So that the Department does not waste its major resource, that is, the intelligence, wisdom and leadership expertise of the major proportion of its teachers.

In conclusion, it seems that the two historical trends of a male dominated society and the administrative barriers of discriminatory regulations have prevented married women from gaining promotion and have led to severe restrictions on the numbers of female Principals in the Primary Division of the Western Australian Education Department and have mitigated against collective responsibility for education planning and educational administration as this applies specifically to females.

The report of the Committee on Sexism in Education (1977, p. 61) stated, "All in all, it is clear that women in executive positions can be classified as an endangered species and may soon be an extinct species."

To save female educational administrators from extinction, the writer considers that several contingencies need to exist.

1. Women need to gain the confidence and determination to demonstrate their competencies and to pursue changes in the regulations which would overcome these barriers.

2. Women need to become acquainted with the promotional system, and to plan their career and apply for positions accordingly.
3. The Department needs to ensure that the assumption does not prevail that men will always be the administrators.
4. A woman's lifestyle needs to be taken into consideration when regulations regarding promotion are considered.

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